

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /057 W

----- 064217

R 091207Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8251

INFO AMCONGEN BOMBAY

AMCONGEN CALCUTTA

AMCONGEN MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 13285

E.O. 11652:VVV GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJECT: BHAVE'S FAST CANCELLED

REF: NEW DELHI 12863, NEW DELHI 12344

1. SAMACHAR REPORTED ON SEPTEMBER 8 THAT ACHARYA VINOBA BHAVE HAS CALLED OFF HIS ANTI-COW SLAUGHTER CAMPAIGN AND CANCELLED AN INDEFINITE FAST ON THAT ISSUE WHICH HE HAD ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED FOR HIS BIRTHDAY, SEPTEMBER 11. ACCORDING TO THE SAMACHAR STORY, WHICH WAS FRONT PAGE NEWS IN THE SEPTEMBER 9 DELHI PRESS, BHAVE SAID THE PROBLEM HAS BEEN LARGELY SOLVED. HE IS DESCRIBED AS TELLING REPORTERS THAT HE WOULD BEGIN TAKING NORMAL FOOD ON SEPTEMBER 11. HE HAD REDUCED HIS INTAKE LAST APRIL. THE SAMACHAR STORY STRESSES BHAVE'S THANKS TO MRS. GANDHI FOR HER ROLE. UNION HOME MINISTER BRAHMANANDA REDDY EXPRESSED HIS HAPPINESS OVER THE DECISION. THE MINISTER SAID HE WAS GLAD THAT THE STATE GOVERNMENTS WHICH HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY HAD HONORED BHAVE'S WISHES. REDDY GAVE FULL CREDIT TO MRS. GANDHI WHO HAD PERSUADED THE STATE GOVERNMENTS TO HEED THE ADVISE OF THE CENTER.

2. THE SIGNED STATEMENT ATTRIBUTED TO BHAVE WAS CARRIED IN FEWER PAPERS. HE REPORTEDLY GIVES CREDIT TO THE FOLLOWING
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IN THIS ORDER: GOD; MOTHER (BHAVE'S MOTHER); MAHATMA

GANDHI; AND INDIRA GANDHI. THE STATEMENT CONCLUDES: "THE FIRST THREE ARE IN HEAVEN. INDIRAJI IS ON EARTH. THANKS TO INDIRAJI. RAM HARI."

3. COMMENT: WE DON'T BELIEVE THE PM'S SPEECH WRITERS COULD HAVE DONE MUCH BETTER HAD THEY DRAFTED THE STATEMENT THEMSELVES. THEY MIGHT HAVE REVERSED THE ORDER OF PRAISE, BUT NO MORE. ALTHOUGH WE CANNOT BE CERTAIN, WE BELIEVE THE CANCELLATION REDUCES BHAVE'S STATURE IN THE EYES OF THE POLITICALLY ASTUTE. HE APPEARS NOW TO BE A WEAK REED, TIMID AND VACILLATING, AND NO MORE IMMUNE TO THE PRESSURES FROM NO. 1 SAFDARJANG THAN ANYONE ELSE. AN OPPOSITION MP COULD TELL US JUST YETERDAY THAT BHAVE'S FAST WILL CERTAINLY BE DIRECTED AGAINST THE EMERGENCY AS WELL AS AGAINST COW SLAUGHTER, BUT THE ACHARYA IS NOW SATISFIED, AND HAS CALLED HIS WORKERS OFF. RESULT: ONE MORE DEFEAT FOR THE OPPOSITION. NO SERIOUS OBSERVER BELIEVES FEWER COWS WILL BE SLAUGHTERED. A FEW OF INDIA'S POOREST MAY NOW PAY A LITTLE MORE FOR PROTEIN. END COMMENT. SAXBE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SPECIES PROTECTION, CATTLE, LEGISLATIVE BILLS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: vogelfj
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976NEWDE13285
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760342-1181
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760977/aaaacokl.tel
Line Count: 80
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 NEW DELHI 12863, 76 NEW DELHI 12344
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: vogelfj
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09 JUN 2004 by buchant0>; APPROVED <07 OCT 2004 by vogelfj>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BHAVE'S FAST CANCELLED
TAGS: PINT, IN, (BHAVE, VINOBA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006